

USDAnews

USDA's Employee News Publication—For You & About You!

USDA Revamps Secretary's Honor Awards Program; 59th Annual Event Is Scheduled For October

by Ron Hall
Office of Communications

June is the month in which USDA employees around the country can typically look forward to the official start of summer, Father's Day, high school and college graduation ceremonies—and the annual Secretary's Honor Awards Program.

Only this year—like last year—USDA's premier employee recognition program won't be held in June. Instead, the program has been markedly revamped and, following a year's hiatus during 2005, it is currently scheduled to be held on October 16, 2006.

Anita Adkins, USDA's Performance Management Program Manager with the Office of Human Capital Management, explained that the annual Secretary's Honor Awards Program was created in 1947 to recognize outstanding contributions by USDA employees in support of the Department's mission. "Over the years," she advised, "the program had greatly increased the number of awards being granted. And some expressed the view that, in the process of that expansion, the significance of any one award had been lessened."

For instance, she pointed out that the 2004 program held on June 25, 2004—which was the last Secretary's Honor Awards Program to be held—recog-

nized 1,102 award recipients.

In addition, Adkins noted that the program's expenses have continued to increase over the years. "The 2004 program cost nearly \$140,000," she said. "The expenses of the program don't include a 'cash award component' to the recipient—since there is no cash award associated with this particular recognition." The travel and per diem expenses of awardees who came from USDA field office locations to Washington, DC for the annual Secretary's Honor Awards Ceremony have been borne by the respective program agencies or staff offices of the award recipients.

Cecilia Matthews, USDA's Employee Recognition Program Manager in OHCM, added that the overall cost figure included an estimated \$30,000 to pay for holding the Honor Awards Ceremony offsite at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, a spacious federal facility a few blocks from USDA headquarters in Washington, DC.

"Also, for the ceremonies during the past several years," she said, "we paid an off-stage announcer from the private sector to provide narration during the ceremony and call out the names of the award winners as they approached the stage to be honored."

Accordingly, following the
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"BAC" is the ugly green creature we use to symbolize the problems caused by unsafe food handling—so you can 'Fight BAC' by washing bacteria off your hands before eating," explains FSIS microbiologist **Zhihong Wang** (left), as she converses with a student during a recent "Career Day" sponsored by FSIS and ARS employees in Athens, Ga. Participants included FSIS microbiologists **Rachel Whitaker** (2nd from left) and **Jeoff Levine** (center). This was one of many USDA mentoring activities for students there—all with a focus on encouraging students to become interested in science. Note Zhihong Wang's story on page 4.—**PHOTO BY BILL CRAY**

EDEN Can Help Your Community Cope When Some Form Of Disaster Strikes

It Also Aided Daycare Kids During 9/11

by Ron Hall
Office of Communications

Ah yes, it's the beginning of summer in the U.S.—which means that, so far in 2006, sections of the Northeast have already experienced major flooding, the Midwest and South have coped with tornadoes, parched portions of the West and Southwest are struggling with another year of miniscule rainfall, and the Gulf Coast is casting a wary eye at what may be another active hurricane season.

In short, **Mother Nature** can be a real trip.

But USDA is assisting in a program designed to help reduce the

impact of disasters at the community level. It's called "EDEN"—or "Extension Disaster Education Network."

Joseph Wysocki is the National Program Leader for Housing and Environment with the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service and is EDEN's overall point of contact. He explained that EDEN is a collaborative effort by Extension Services across the country, through the nation's land grant universities, to share education resources, in order to reduce the impact of disasters and aid in recovery.

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Mike Johanns *Secretary of Agriculture*

Dear Fellow Employees, Stepping back and looking at the big picture can be rewarding when what you see is the culmination of years of good work. That is the best way I can think of to describe the effects of our efforts in the Rural Development mission area on rural America.

Like other USDA employees who have much to show for their hard work, those who work for Rural Development can take pride in their achievements.

During last year's Farm Bill Forums, we heard near universal praise for our assistance to rural communities, ranging from medical facilities and fire trucks to libraries and retirement homes.

These accomplishments are quite different from those needed a few decades ago when rural America was dominated by farming, ranching, forestry, and mining. In those days, rural poverty and isolation drove federal farm policy.

But if you look at rural America as a whole, from the cornfields of Iowa to the Central Valley of California, from the gentrifying small towns of New England to native villages in Alaska and communities of the Southwest, there is one constant, and that is change.

In a single lifetime we've gone from walking behind a mule to gene splicing and GPS mapping. Harnessing change, and transforming it into opportunity, is what rural development is all about.

This takes leadership, vision, and initiative.

Rural Development has met the challenge by working to improve the basic framework that rural areas need to thrive: providing or improving water and wastewater systems, community facilities, housing, and access to the Internet.

As we celebrate National Homeownership Month in July it is important to note that because of our efforts the rural homeownership rate exceeds the national rate by a wide margin: about 76 percent compared to nearly 69 percent. Since 2001, we have invested nearly \$21 billion to help more than 250,000 rural Americans achieve the dream of homeownership.

In support of National Homeownership Month, we will be announcing special eligibility considerations for low and moderate-income home loan applicants who are purchasing newer, energy-efficient homes. In addition, we have launched an exciting new initiative to revitalize our multi-family housing portfolio. Since 2001, we have invested more than \$12 billion to provide decent, affordable housing to more than half a million residents.

I am proud of all USDA employees who work hard to deliver services and expertise to the people we serve. But, I am pleased to single out our Rural Development staff for special kudos as I continue to hear about the tremendous difference you are making in rural America from true experts on the subject: the residents of rural America! You are making a real difference in our rural communities. Thanks for a job well done. ■

Honor Awards Program...continued from pg. 1

2004 program, a committee of several senior level employees from across the Department was formed to examine the existing program with the charge of making it more streamlined and revitalized while reducing costs as appropriate, plus enhance its significance to the overall mission of USDA. The 2005 program was suspended while this review was conducted.

Following completion of the committee's review and proposals, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration **Peter Thomas** provided a Decision Memorandum, dated Feb. 3, 2006 and titled "Streamlining the Secretary's Honor Awards Program," to Secretary **Mike Johanns**.

That memo included the following recommendations:

① Limit each USDA subcabinet official to a maximum of four Honor Award nominations, and limit each USDA Staff Office to one Honor Award nomination. Those nominations may take the form of an Individual Award or a Group Award. A Group Award nomination is to be limited to a maximum of 35 employees. Whichever is the form of the Award nomination, the overall Honor Award nomination ceiling remains four and one, respectively, for each under/assistant secretary and each staff office.

② Award nominations would continue to be requested in categories that are aligned with the Department's Strategic Plan. Those categories include: "Enhancing Economic Opportunities for Agricultural Producers," "Supporting Increased Economic Opportunities and Improved Quality of Life in Rural Areas," "Enhancing Protection and Safety of the Nation's Agriculture and Food Supply," "Improving the Nation's Nutrition and Health," "Protecting and Enhancing the Nation's Natural Resource Base and Environment," "Supporting the President's Management Agenda and Civil Rights," and "Heroism and Emergency Response."

③ Return the ceremony itself to USDA facilities—specifically, the Jefferson Auditorium in USDA's South Building in Washington, DC.

④ Retain the award category of "heroism" as part of the Secretary's Honor Awards Program, but limit eligibility to acts that occurred in the line of duty.

⑤ Several recognitions and acknowledgments had, in the past, been included as part of the Secretary's Honor Awards ceremony and, therefore, had been included in the Honor Awards booklet. However, in the future those generally would be shifted to an agency-level recognition or ceremony. Included in this category are awards given by

organizations outside of USDA and the length-of-service acknowledgments of Departmental employees who have served for 40 or more years in the federal government.

Johanns subsequently approved the recommendations in the Decision Memorandum.

Matthews said that for the next—and 59th—Secretary's Honor Awards Ceremony its planners are relying on the "pool of employee talent" within USDA to provide the services of an off-stage announcer. **Ron Buckhalt**, a special projects coordinator with the Agricultural Research Service, has agreed to serve in that role, and, since he is a USDA employee, there is no charge to the Department for that service.

On May 3, 2006 Thomas sent a memo, titled "59th Secretary's Honor Awards Program," to USDA agency heads and deputy administrators of management. In that memo he outlined the overall changes to the Secretary's Honor Awards Program and advised that the deadline for nominations for the 2006 program was July 1, 2006.

"We're in a results-oriented culture here at USDA," Adkins said. "We want the Secretary's Honor Awards Program—the Department's premier recognition program—to shine the spotlight on USDA's top performers even better than before." ■

Notes *from USDA Headquarters*

*In the past two months, Secretary **Mike Johanns** released the first of several farm bill theme papers authored by USDA economists and analysts—one about risk management and another about conservation and the environment. These are some of the subject areas that warranted a thorough examination based on comments received from thousands of producers who attended last year's Farm Bill Forums. Other theme papers will be released in the months ahead. Check the www.usda.gov/farmbill website for copies.*

The Secretary also announced a joint USDA-Department of Energy national renewable energy conference to be held in October, continued efforts to educate the public and media about avian influenza, participated in ongoing world trade negotiations, observed Hunger Awareness Day, and reviewed positive trade-related changes between the U.S. and Sub-Saharan Africa at the 5th forum of the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

National Renewable Energy Conference Set For October:

USDA and the U.S. Department of Energy will co-host a conference to help create partnerships and strategies necessary to accelerate commercialization of renewable energy industries and distribution systems, the crux of President **George W. Bush's** Advanced Energy Initiative. The conference will be held in St. Louis, Mo., October 10-12. "Keeping America competitive calls upon us to work together to expand sustainable, market-driven, domestic energy sources," Secretary Johanns

said. "The October conference will build upon the President's vision for overcoming our energy challenges and help create new wealth opportunities in rural communities."

Avian Influenza Education And Outreach:

As the lead agency in the government's efforts to combat avian influenza (AI) in birds, Secretary Johanns is working to educate the media and the public about the steps USDA is taking to prevent the disease. He traveled to New York to meet with executives of major television and radio networks and briefed them about USDA's communications strategy in the event of a highly pathogenic H5N1 detection in this country. He has made numerous television and radio public service announcements, which were distributed to stations throughout the nation. He and Under Secretary for Food Safety **Richard Raymond** videotaped answers to frequently asked questions about AI and safe poultry preparation. As of mid-June, these PSA's have aired 835 times on 301 TV stations in 174 markets. This work will continue to be a priority in the months ahead. For more information go to: www.usda.gov/birdflu

WTO Negotiations:

Secretary Johanns and a team of USDA experts traveled to London and Geneva to participate in discussions related to the Doha Development Round of the World Trade Organization. The Secretary continues to call for the European Union to match the ambition set forth by the U.S. proposal. With the Doha round nearing its scheduled conclusion, the Secretary has said time is running out but there is still reason for



Secretary **Mike Johanns** (left) receives the Combined Federal Campaign's Million Dollar Club Award from **Norman Mineta**, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation and Honorary CFC Chairman for 2005. **Byron Anderson**, Associate Administrator of the Risk Management Agency and manager of USDA's CFC activities in the Washington, DC metropolitan area for 2005, noted that USDA employees in the DC area contributed more than \$2 million to the 2005 Combined Federal Campaign, which ended in December.—**PHOTO BY ALICE WELCH**

optimism that an agreement to open new markets for U.S. farm products can be reached.

Hunger Awareness Day:

National Hunger Awareness Day was created in 2002 by America's Second Harvest to focus on the existence of hunger in America. Secretary Johanns observed the occasion on June 6 by saluting public and private sector initiatives to end hunger. USDA's national nutrition safety net touches the lives of one in every five Americans. Of the 15 food assistance programs, the cornerstone is the Food Stamp Program. It served nearly 26 million people in FY 2005, half of whom are children. In addition 29.6 million children received school lunches, and over 8 million people participated in the Women, Infants, and Children Program.

African Growth And Opportunity Act (AGOA):

Two-way trade between the United States and Sub-Saharan Africa rose to almost \$61 billion in 2005. AGOA encourages trade with African nations that implement good economic and political reforms. In return nearly all products from those countries can enter the U.S. duty-free. That market access has led to the creation of tens of thousands of new jobs in Africa and has attracted hundreds of millions of dollars of new investment. At the 5th AGOA Forum held in Washington, DC in early June, Secretary Johanns announced he will conduct a trade and investment mission to East Africa this fall. "I'm confident this mission will help advance our goals to reduce trade barriers and increase trade between the U.S. and East Africa creating new job opportunities for all our citizens," he said.

—**PATRICIA KLINTBERG**

Employees *make these things happen*

Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services

RMA Is Using Specialized Weather Data To Guard Against Crop Insurance Fraud

Some of the high-tech images that we see on “The Weather Channel” can elicit an “Oh, wow!” from even the most jaded TV viewer. Recently, specialists from USDA have been relying on specialized weather data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, in combination with satellite imagery, to verify whether reported claims of crop loss—based on weather factors—did or did not occur.

The significance of this is that it helps ensure that crop insurance claims to USDA, from farmers and ranchers, are based on accurate—and truthful—data.

Jim Hipple, the Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Systems Advisor in the Risk Management Agency’s Strategic Data Acquisition and Analysis Office, said that for years RMA specialists have used satellite-imaging technology to monitor such activities as when a farmer plants his/her crops, what crops they are, how often they are irrigated, and when—or if—the crops are harvested.

Those specialists accessing the multi-spectral satellite images typically are responding to an initial heads-up from field-site specialists from RMA, the Farm Service Agency, or the Office of Inspector General, or from crop insurance industry specialists, who have noticed something—concerning a

crop insurance claim—that concerns them.

So the next step is often to check the matter out a little further by relying on satellite images of the farm or ranch acreage in question. “Satellites take those images at roughly two-week intervals,” noted **Kirk Bryant**, the crop insurance specialist with the RMA Strategic Data Acquisition and Analysis Field Office in Raleigh, N.C.

Hipple added that seven USDA agencies are members of the “USDA Satellite Image Archive” which is run by the Production Estimates and Crop Assessment Division in the Foreign Agricultural Service. “The seven agencies each pay \$75,000 annually to the ‘USDA Satellite Image Archive’ to receive satellite imagery of farmland and ranchland across America,” he said. “In turn, we use those images in support of our respective missions—and we all believe we get more than our money’s worth out of them.” Over the last three years RMA’s use of those images has averaged about 600 images a year.

But increasingly of late, once a USDA specialist has seen something—relating to a crop insurance claim—that he/she feels may be questionable, that specialist will turn to weather data. “We’ll use that data to further support—or refute—our concern,” Hipple advised.

NOAA’s weather data—which the specialists are increasingly using as a next step—is

more formally called the “Next Generation Weather Radar System” or “Nexrad.” It generally provides archival weather information, dating back to 1991, which specialists typically overlay with the satellite imagery. “If these two different sources match, then that may tend to support a crop insurance claim which asserts that the crop damage was caused by weather,” Hipple said. “If the sources do not match, then there may be a problem with that crop insurance claim.”

They refer to this combination of satellite imagery with weather data as “Forensic Remote Sensing Analysis.”

Garland Westmoreland, Director of RMA’s SDAA Office, noted that crop insurance fraud typically takes the form of overstating a crop loss, claiming a crop loss that never occurred, or causing a crop loss intentionally in order to file a claim.

He said that at any given time his office has several dozen cases in which it is engaged in Forensic Remote Sensing Analysis.

So, how much money has this new technique saved both USDA and crop insurance policyholders?

“Well, we’re certain of what we actually find, but we don’t know what we’re deterring,” Westmoreland advised. “However, the only real way to tell is if we were to stop using Forensic Remote Sensing Analysis.”

—**RON HALL**

Food Safety/Research, Education, and Economics

We’re Mentoring Today’s Students—Who May Be Tomorrow’s Scientists

“This is what I’m going to be. I want to be a scientist!” declared **Javaris Carruth**, a student at Fowler Drive Elementary School in Clarke County, Ga.

His comments followed a recent Career Fair which USDA employees from Athens, Ga., organized and participated in. And that’s exactly what those employees wanted to hear—because it reflected some of the benefits of their ongoing mentor program.

Employees with the Food Safety and Inspection Service and the Agricultural Research Service in Athens have been mentoring elementary school students in that area for several years.

Now, mentoring by USDA employees of local students is an activity that Departmental employees from headquarters and field

locations across the country have participated in, as volunteers, for years—if not decades. Previous issues of the **USDA NEWS** have focused on such employee activities around the nation.

But the difference in this particular initiative, according to **Lynda Kelley**, an FSIS scientific advisor in Athens, is that the focus is on encouraging students to become interested in science.

“We’re working with these students, who generally come from a low-income neighborhood, to encourage them to study and work hard to stay in school,” she affirmed. “Our goal is to get the students hooked on science early, so they can begin to consider college—and a science career.”

And, added FSIS chemist **Kristi McEntire**, the participating employees aren’t just strolling into a class and then winging it.



ARS microbiologist **Robin Kuntz** holds a petri dish as she explains to students how swabs of bacteria taken from everyday sources, such as dirt and doorknobs, can easily grow in a lab culture. —**PHOTO BY MARIE BABCOCK**

Employees who volunteer to work with students one-on-one have all participated in “mentor training” so they can work with the students more productively. “The mentor training focuses on effective ‘do’s and don’ts’ regarding one-on-one training with students,” explained FSIS microbiologist

Editor's Roundup *USDA's people in the news*



Boyd Rutherford is the Assistant Secretary for Administration.

Before joining USDA, from January 2003 until his confirmation for this position by the U.S. Senate Rutherford served as the Secretary of the Department of General Services for the State of Maryland. He was the Associate Administrator for both the Office of Performance Improvement and also the Office of Small Business Utilization with the U.S. General Services Administration from 2001-03.

Rutherford served from 2000-01 as Director of Business Development for the Kelly Law Registry, a legal placement firm based in Washington, DC. From 1990-2000 he practiced law,

specializing in regulatory law and litigation, first in California, then in Washington, DC, and finally in Baltimore.

Michael Harrison, the previous Assistant Secretary for Administration, held that position from spring 2005 until he resigned in October 2005. ■



Steve Connelly is the Deputy Administrator for Field Operations in the Farm Service Agency.

From June 2004 until his appointment to this position Connelly served as the Assistant Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs in FSA. He was the FSA state executive director for Maryland, based in Columbia, Md., from 2001-2004.

From 1995-2001 Connelly

served as the Executive Director of the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation. He was the Director of Intergovernmental Relations for three different Maryland secretaries of agriculture from 1987-95. From 1985-87 he was the assistant to the Director of Government Affairs at the Maryland Farm Bureau, based in Randallstown, Md.

Doug Frago, the previous Deputy Administrator for Field Operations in FSA, retired from that position following 15 years of federal service. ■



Michel Desbois is the Deputy Administrator for Information Systems and

Technology Management in the Cooperative State Research, Ed-

ucation, and Extension Service.

From February 2005 until his selection for this position Desbois served as the acting Deputy Administrator for Information Systems and Technology Management (ISTM) in CSREES. From 2002-2005 he was Director of Applications in CSREES's ISTM, where he was responsible for all software development for the agency.

From 1999-2002 Desbois served as the Chief Information Officer for the National Institute on Drug Abuse within the National Institutes of Health. He was an information technology program manager with the Military Traffic Management Command in Falls Church, Va., from 1996-99, after having been a computer specialist there from 1991-96. He was an engineer for the U.S. Department of the Army from 1987-91.

Sally Rockey, CSREES's previous Deputy Administrator for In-

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Stephanie Hretz.

ARS biological laboratory technician **Diane Smith** noted that, to date, 10 FSIS and ARS employees have completed that mentor training.

FSIS Pathology Branch Chief **Mary Sutton** explained that, as part of the focus on science, the USDA mentors have relied on providing role models, hands-on experiences, lectures, and materials.

For example, FSIS microbiologist **Monifa Peterson** said that the mentors have given presentations on such topics as food safety, oceanography, chicken hatching, and "chemistry magic."

Second, USDA scientists have been volunteering for "Ask-A-Scientist." FSIS supervisory chemist **Maritza Quinn**, who helped put the panel of scientists together, explained that this is an initiative in which one USDA scientist a month is "on call" to answer science questions posed by students and teachers through e-mail. **Eric Line**, an ARS research food technologist in Athens who is part of that "on call" activity and who frequently conducts 'egg hatching' demonstrations at the school, said that some of the questions he has been asked include "Why do baby chickens look wet

when they first hatch?" and "Do the chicks understand you when you talk to them?"

"To the students at the school, I *am* the 'Chicken Man'," he quipped.

Third, ARS chemist **Maurice Snook** said that volunteers serve as classroom "moms" or "dads" as they read to a class, sponsor a club, and/or help develop team-building—all to further an interest in science.

Fourth, items that are no longer of use to USDA have been recycled into the classroom rather than going to the landfill. FSIS secretary **Debbie Perry** said that discarded five-gallon jugs—which normally contain a powder to help enrich bacteria in the FSIS lab—have been used for teaching subjects such as "how heavy is water?" and for storing "messy science materials" such as soil, rocks, and straw. "Students also put nylon netting in these jugs," she explained, "so they can keep the caterpillars and butterflies when the class hatches caterpillars."

Fifth, in April ARS and FSIS employees organized and participated in that elementary school's first Career Fair, held for its fourth and fifth grade students—and their parents. **Cathy Pentz**, Chief of FSIS's Microbiology Quality Assurance Branch in Athens, noted that, as part of that activity, USDA employees gave science-oriented presentations.



ARS chemist **Maurice Snook** (standing) pours a little of this and adds a touch of that, as he engages in "chemistry magic" before an audience of awed elementary school students.—**PHOTO BY MARIE BABCOCK**

Plus, she said, during "Career Day" at the Career Fair, they developed and staffed six science-oriented booths.

Now here's an extra bonus, for USDA, that resulted from these activities. "One young student," recounted FSIS microbiologist **Rachel Whitaker**, "came up to me after the Career Fair and said 'Ms. Whitaker, when I grow up, can I work for the United States Department of Agriculture as a microbiologist just like you?' So I replied that he could do anything he set his mind to."

"And then I thought to myself—to paraphrase **Neil Armstrong**—'BINGO. The Eagle Has Landed'."

—**ZHIHONG WANG**

formation Systems and Technology Management, is Deputy Director of the Office of Extramural Research at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md. ■



“Lights! Camera! Action!”

Walt Douglas heard those words a lot recently,

during the filming of a national commercial for the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

That’s because he was one of its stars.

Douglas is based in Columbia,

S.C., as the State Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service. He was also one of four federal employees, each of whom is individually featured in his/her own commercial, designed to air nationwide. This is part of OPM’s effort to recruit candidates for federal positions—especially in light of the anticipated ‘federal retirement tsunami’ of Baby Boomers.

The commercial featuring Douglas begins by identifying him by work title, geographic location, federal department, and agency within USDA. The fast-paced ad then presents a collage of images illustrating NRCS’s mis-

sion. Within the space of 30 seconds the commercial shows the viewer that NRCS conserves natural resources such as soil, water, air, plants, and animals.

Positioned in several outdoor settings, Douglas invites the viewer to “Look at this beautiful country. And people ask me why I love my job?! The work I do results in reduced soil erosion, improved water quality, wildlife habitats, and wetlands. It means better—and more affordable—food for the whole world!” The narrator then says, “Fantastic, Walt! Where do you work?” “I work for the United States Government!” Douglas declares.

The narrator then advises that, “All over the world, U.S. Government employees are doing exciting jobs on behalf of our country. What did *you* do at *your* job today? Check it out. Join us. Make an impact. USAJOBS.gov/impact”

All four OPM commercials—which are also web-captioned—can be found at [www.opm.gov/Video_Library/Recruitment Showcase](http://www.opm.gov/Video_Library/RecruitmentShowcase)

So, out of the literally millions of federal employees located across the country and around the world, how did Douglas happen to be one of the four individ-

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PROFILE PLUS *More About: Gladys Gary Vaughn*



If Gladys Gary Vaughn’s parents had known there would one day be an Office of Outreach in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (O/ASCR) at USDA, they could not have prepared their daughter any better for the job of its Director.

Vaughn has been an author, teacher, mentor, grant-getter, community activist, administrator, and public speaker. She began her duties at O/ASCR in May 2004 after serving six years as National Program Leader for Human Sciences Research in CSREES.

Vaughn, her three sisters, and one brother grew up on their parents’ diversified farm operation—livestock and produce—in Ocala, Fla. From an early age she knew her parents expected her and her siblings to seek a higher education. They did.

A product of the Land Grant University system, Vaughn’s extended education spurred her interest and success in outreach. She began with participation in 4-H programs and by completing an undergraduate degree in textiles, clothing, and home economics from Florida A&M University in Tallahassee.

The year was 1964, the height of the civil rights era. She went to Iowa State University in Ames on a full, three-year scholarship. But she also went from the bustle of a small city to a University surrounded by cornfields. “There was nothing to do but study,” she said.

Vaughn earned her Masters Degree in home economics education at Ames but left before completing her doctoral work. She had once joked to her mother that, “the only thing black in Iowa is me and the dirt.” But the reality of her situation was that there were fewer than 100 minority students out of an 18,000-member student body. “I met people who had never seen an African-American.”

While others were protesting the war in Vietnam, The Black Student Organization, of which she was a member, challenged the University to recruit minority students. They also wanted a new science building named for George Washington Carver, a former student and creator of many technological advances in agriculture. The University named an English Department building after Carver instead.

Since Vaughn and others had pledged to leave the University if their demands were not met, she and her husband went home to Florida, where Vaughn taught home economics.

Next came medical school for her husband at Howard University

and a serendipitous meeting between Vaughn and a former professor who had relocated to the University of Maryland, College Park. While earning the doctorate, she worked on a USAID-funded international project, supervised field staff in 25 developing countries, and helped create training-of-trainer programs and curricular materials that centered on teaching the connections between behavior and the hopes and dreams a person has for their family, themselves, and their community. One of those programs, called “Working with Villagers,” is still in use by the Peace Corps.

How does all this translate into running the Office of Outreach? Vaughn believes outreach is a contact sport. Not satisfied with mailing brochures or sending mass emails, she is coordinating a continuing dialogue with groups that represent the under-served, like the Federation for Southern Cooperatives, the Rural Coalition, United Farmers USA, and the Hmong Development Association, to name a few.

“Creating and continuing a dialogue helps us understand what the problems are. It also helps those who participate understand what our limitations are by statute or regulation,” she said. As a result, “representatives of these groups have begun to feel their voices are being heard. Secretary **Mike Johanns** listened at the 2005 Partners Meeting, and invited the participants to begin a regular dialogue with him. That’s progress in and of itself,” Vaughn said.

Last Book Read: “*Fortunate Son*” by **Walter Mosley**.

Last Movie Seen: “*Akeelah and the Bee*.”

Hobbies: Reading, travel, public speaking, the Arts, museums.

Favorite Weekend Breakfast: Grits, eggs, bacon or scrapple, toast, milk, orange juice, hot tea with lemon.

Priorities In The Months Ahead: “We are planning the Third Annual Partners Meeting, working with NASS and the small farm coordinators to increase participation in the next census of agriculture. As a requirement of the 2002 Farm Bill, we are analyzing data from the Section 10708 reports for 2003 and 2004 to determine changes in the participation of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in USDA programs, and preparing the 2005 Section 10708 Report. We are also trying to bring all agencies to the table to develop a coordinated outreach plan for the Department, and a USDA-wide conference coordination strategy. Through all of these efforts can emerge greater visibility, more efficient programming, less duplication of effort, and an improved public image of the Department.”

—**PATRICIA KLINTBERG**

uals selected to star in these recruitment commercials?

"Well, it's my understanding that OPM had some contacts in this geographical area, and those contacts apparently made some recommendations, and I guess it all evolved like that," he speculated.

"Many of our jobs here in USDA are very visual and take place in outdoor settings," added **Doug McKalip**, Director of Legislative and Public Affairs for NRCS. "That will appeal to young candidates for federal positions."

Douglas said that OPM contacted him in January about starring in one of the commercials—and OPM's film crew was hoping to arrive onsite a few days later to start filming.

"Ironically, I was going on annual leave in South Carolina, when the film crew reached me," he recalled. "They had asked us to choose a farm with a landowner who was willing to appear in the commercial with me. So we were able to choose a rural farm site—close to where I was vacationing—that is a prime example of the benefits of NRCS's conservation assistance. Plus, the landowner who appears—on his property—is an outstanding conservationist."

OPM's ad campaign was officially launched on May 1 with a press conference held at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. "I was invited to attend the kickoff," he said. "And when I saw all the reporters and TV

cameras, and then found out that the kickoff was being aired live on C-SPAN, that's when I really realized what a big deal this all was."

OPM plans to air the ads nationwide during 2006, but test-market them first at selected locations. One such test-marketing has already occurred in upstate South Carolina—a site of several of the state's colleges. "Our state office here in Columbia," Douglas said, "has already gotten phone calls and e-mails from people who have seen the ad."

"And a number of those callers," he laughed, "told me they want to be my agent—since they're positive I'm going to move to Hollywood by the end of the year." ■

—AMY MAXWELL

EDEN Can Help...continued from pg. 1

"EDEN," added **Bill Hoffman**, CSREES's National Program Leader for Agricultural Homeland Security, "is designed to improve service delivery to those affected by disasters."

Wysocki said that the Extension Disaster Education Network accomplishes this by: sharing a variety of research and education programs that address the various stages of disaster mitigation, preparation, response, and recovery; providing linkages with federal, state, and local agencies and organizations; anticipating future disaster education needs and actions; and providing timely and prompt communications and delivery of information that meet audience needs.

"That may be a lot of verbiage. But the bottom line: EDEN is the premier provider of disaster education resources that are delivered through our land grant university system."

Ed Jones, Associate Director for Agricultural Programs at North Carolina State University in Raleigh and Chair of EDEN, said EDEN was formed in 1994 following the "Great Flood of '93" in the Midwest and North Central states. "Following that disaster, extension educators recognized a need for a network that could share education resources which focused on disaster prevention and recovery."

The Extension Disaster Education Network then received its first round of funding in 2002 from CSREES. "Today," he affirmed, "49 states and three territories—Guam, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico—are represented in the EDEN network." Massachusetts is presently considering that option.

As a national network, EDEN's points of contact communicate informally through an e-mail group, and they meet annually. EDEN also has its own website: www.EDEN.lsu.edu

EDEN provides online, train-the-trainer materials to teach Extension educators about disaster-related topics. **Dennis Kopp**, the Assistant Administrator for Program and Analysis in CSREES, said recent materials

focused on protecting America's food system, plant biosecurity management, and USDA roles in the federal National Response Plan.

Okay, that all sounds nice—but what has EDEN done for us lately?

Several EDEN points of contact were quick to provide responses to that question.

For instance, **Steve Cain**, the EDEN Homeland Security Project Director at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind., noted that in November 2005, high winds and tornadoes struck Indiana, killing 24 people and destroying or damaging hundreds of homes.

"However, as part of our EDEN planning," said **Gary Michel**, Extension educator in Warrick County, Ind., "awhile ago Purdue Extension had developed a prearranged Memorandum of Agreement to use the county fairgrounds—located near the worst storm damage—as a staging area for volunteers to organize, in order to remove debris and to use fairground facilities to shelter displaced people, pets, and livestock."

When that storm moved through Warrick County, the destruction it left behind was located closer to area churches than to local fairgrounds. So Michel and other volunteers used the same approach contained in the Memo of Agreement to, instead, use church property as a staging area for volunteers.

Eric Hallman, Director of the Agricultural Health and Safety Program at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., recounted that the terrorist attacks on New York City's World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001 saw innumerable urgent requests on the various communication lines. But, he noted, there was one particularly unique request, and EDEN was able to respond to it immediately.

The request was: "How do we talk to kids in New York City's daycare centers and schools about 9/11?" "That request came in from several elementary schools simultaneously, immediately after the planes hit the two towers," recalled New York EDEN Coor-



*FSIS microbiologist **Monifa Peterson** (center) is getting a kick out of watching a student interact with a model of a common cold virus. Note **Zhihong Wang's** story on page 4.—PHOTO BY MARIE BABCOCK*

dinator **Ellen Abend**. The EDEN Network sent that request back out to its points of contact around the country. "And, right away, someone responded," she said, "advising that 'Yeah, I've dealt with that, and here's what I said to the kids'. So, in turn, we e-mailed that information out to daycare centers and schools all around the country."

Becky Koch, the Director of Agricultural Communications at North Dakota State University in Fargo, advised that when snow melts too quickly in the spring, the Red River often floods the farmland that surrounds it. "In fact," she said, "rapid snowmelt this past spring resulted in flooding that was only two feet short of the 500-year flood level of 37 feet."

"So, even as the Red River was rising," added NDSU Extension engineer **Ken Hellevang**, "the NDSU Extension Service updated a web page with information on such topics as how to correctly build a sandbag dike, steps to reduce flood or water damage in homes, and the proper use of sump pumps." He said that local news reporters used this information and county Extension agents distributed it at sandbag filling and distribution sites.

"When the lights go out," advised Wysocki, "successful recovery after a disaster can depend on previously developed partnerships and information sharing."

"By relying on EDEN, we think you can up the odds on that happening." ■



*"The last time this watercolor was shown publicly was at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893," notes **Susan Fugate** (right), Head of Special Collections with the National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, Md. She and NAL visitor **VeRonika Merrill** are checking out a watercolor by **William Henry Prestele**—who, in 1887, became the first botanical artist hired by USDA's [then] Division of Pomology, which is now within the Agricultural Research Service. He subsequently produced botanical illustrations for USDA and the Smithsonian Institution. The 112-piece exhibition, recently on display at NAL headquarters, featured original watercolors and lithographic prints of **Joseph Prestele** and his three sons—including William Henry—plus other items which documented that family's work for botanists and horticulturalists in the late 1800s. Fugate noted that this was the biggest and most formal exhibit of original works of rare items that NAL has undertaken.—**PHOTO BY SARA LEE***



HELP US FIND Nhi Thi-Hue Phan

Missing: 5-12-2006 From: Silver Spring, MD

D.O.B. 8-25-1991 Sex: Female

Hair: Red Eyes: Brown

Height: 5 ft. 3 in. Weight: 125 lbs.

If you have information, please call

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